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# Strategies for interactive communication, with external and internal stakeholders, in events' marketing

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## Abstract

During the development of the events a key element is represented by the interactive communication, realized with all the persons implicated in the event; the company that realizes the event, the organization that ordered the event, the participants. It can be rightly stated that the success and the impact of an event largely depends also on the way in which it is communicated with the participants, even with the authorities. During the events, the interactive communication must be very good realized and managed because some information must be delivered only to some employees, other to all of them or only to those implicated. The restrictions are assigned mainly by the budget allocated to that specific event or by the regulations in force in the area where the specific event unfolds, but also the stakeholders that can be internal or external.

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## 1. Introduction

The specific of the processes developed in the interactive marketing complaints the devise of some strategic options that serve as basis of some actions of operative management out of which are distinguished: the flow management (also found as the string management), met widely in the development of some large scale events from the sport, cultural events, festivals field etc. The neglecting of the issue is reflected on multiple plans, the most frequent to the situation claiming another series of strategic options that make the object of the conflicts between segments management. The situation is frequently met in the sporting events where the conflict between “galleries” degenerates in open conflicts that seriously affect the development of the event itself. But the conflicts between segments management represents only one facet of a more general strategic option known as multiple segments management, a component specific to the interactive marketing generated by the co-existence, in the moment of the creation and delivery of the events, of more segments. The companies use a wide range of techniques through which they ensure the meeting of the requirements of each and every segment. For instance, in case of some concerts, on the same stage can perform in the same time two different bands, as genre and not only and the participants can choose which one of the two bands they want to listen to. But of this “luxury” cannot benefit all the events, usually the organizers, after the segmentation of the audience; direct the whole event by taking into consideration the

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segment with the highest weight. (Clow & Baack, 2004) Some authors consider that the organization communicates its image and the one of its products/ services offered since the entrance of the consumer at the place of the development of the event, together with the first contact with the personnel or simply through the atmosphere created. The effect of the communications can be positive or negative. Any company, that sends information and messages about the products/ services provided, must be preoccupied by their integration in a unitary system in order for the consumers to be able to create an overall image about the offer of the organization.

According strictly from this point of view of the proper interactive communication, the organizers of events have available the following strategic options (Goldblatt, 2005):

- a. the use of some “media” communication means of the type: advertising at the place of sale (posters, billboards, flyers), information indicators, user guides, environment;
- b. the use of some “interpersonal” communication means of the type: personnel in contact, commercial personnel (in case of the fairs, exhibitions, etc.), clients (“orally” promotion).

## 2. External communication

The companies can appeal to a large variety of events for communicating with the target audience, both from the external and internal environment of the company. If the realization of some events is optional depending on the budgets assigned to the communication, instead others are compulsory, such as the General Assembly. In this way, can be realized a table with different strategic options which an organization can choose for realizing an event. These strategic options depend of course at first also upon the financial, human and material resources that the given organization disposes of for the realization of the specific event. The most important criteria that were taken into account, with the mention that can be added others are: the type of event, the way in which it is realized (in direct labour, outsourced or joint), the location where the event takes place ( must be taken into account if the organization has space assigned and sufficient for the development of the event because in case that the space is too small for the number of participants their experience can be unpleasant), the period in which the event takes place (it firstly must be considered also the availability of the participants to come to the event) and the participation tax ( if for some events the participation or the entrance is free, for other events there exists a participation tax of which quantum increases in direct proportion with the demand for such an event).

Table 1. The external communication through event strategies

Criteria: 1. The type of event	2. Realized in: direct labour / externalized / joint	3. Location: at the headquarter of the organization / in another location	4. Period: weekend / during the week	5. Tax for the participants: with tax/ free of charge
A. Sponsorship / Patron	a. mainly externalized b. joint	a. in another location, usually where the sponsored event takes place	a. when the event takes place	a. free entrance usually for sponsors b. entrance or participation tax
B. Conferences	a. mainly direct labour b. externalized c. joint	a. usually at the headquarter of the organization if it disposes of the necessary space b. another location	a. weekend b. during the week	a. participation tax b. discount for particular members
C. Symposiums	a. externalized b. direct labour c. joint	a. usually in other locations	a. during the week b. weekend	a. participation tax b. free for sponsors
D. Seminars	a. direct labour b. externalized c. joint	a. in another location, usually where the sponsored event takes place	a. usually during the week	a. participation tax b. free of charge
E. The General Assembly	a. direct labour	a. at the headquarter of the organization if it disposes of the necessary space b. another location such as conference rooms	a. during the week	a. free of charge
F. International, national and local fairs and exhibitions	a. direct labour b. joint	a. at the place where the fair or exhibition takes place	a. when the event takes place	a. entrance tax b. rarely free of charge
G. Launching of products / services / rebranding	a. direct labour b. joint	a. at the headquarter of the organization b. other locations such as retail outlets of the products	a. when it is decided the launching	a. free of charge b. with participation tax
H. Touring performances	a. direct labour b. joint	a. in another location	a. during the week b. weekend	a. free of charge
I. Workshops	a. direct labour b. joint	a. usually at the headquarter of the organization if it disposes of the necessary space	a. during the week b. weekend	a. free of charge b. with participation tax

J. Open Day	b. another location			
	a. direct labour	a. at the headquarter of the organization	a. decided by the organization	a. free of charge

Essentially, the chosen strategy is described by a combination of alternatives constituted by taking into consideration each and every criterion. In this way can be chosen different strategic options (table 1) that must firstly take into account also the budget, human and material restrictions for the realization of different types of events and secondly the possible audience of the event concerning the period, tax and location in which it will take place. For each event there may be chosen different strategies, and also applied particular methods depending on the targeted segment, as an organizer might send free of charge invitations for VIP's as the others have to pay. For example, in the case of a conference (1.B), the chosen strategy could look as follows: realized in direct labour (mainly externalized 2.a), the place of development: the headquarter of the organization (in another location 3.a), the period in which the conference takes place (during the week 4.b) and the participation tax to be applied to the participants from outside the institution (free entrance usually for sponsors 5.a).

### 3. Internal communication

Regarding the internal communication strategies in the events marketing have some special features. The internal communication represents a component of the marketing mix specific to the marketing from the interior of the company having an essential role in ensuring the accordance between the promised events (offered) that address to the audience from the internal environment and the ones created and delivered in the interactive marketing. As communicational system, the internal communication is realized between the personnel of a company that executes activities for the promised services and for the ones created and delivered.

Consequently, the internal communication is indissolubly related to the “personnel” of the company that communicates through the event.( Filip, 2011) Therefore, it aims at the attraction, support and agreement of the personnel, the increase of the degree of its involvement in the realization of the event. It cannot be omitted neither the fact that reaching the audience from an organization is almost as hard as reaching the audience represented by the general public. It can be remembered also the fact that it is preferable to be communicated with the employees, just before he enters in the organization, during the time in which he activates inside it, and also after the end of the contract.

In this way, the internal communication of the marketing ranks with the managerial communication, at the superior management level, having a specific role, the one of contributing to the attaining of the objectives stipulated in the marketing plans of the organization. Its objectives are derived from the ones of the marketing, being included in some specific programs, using specific means of internal communication. (Olteanu, 2005)

In the plan of action, for the development of the event, there will be taken decisions about the message and mean in which it will be delivered to the audience, taking into consideration the moment and the right place in order for this to reach the target audience. It must be considered also the period of time necessary for the realization of researches on the employees, the writing, the editing and the realization of the message in order for this to be as brief and on subject. The means of internal communication used are the following (JCI, 2009):

- Newsletters in a written form, edited in an efficient form once per month;
- Newsletters in electronic format that attain precisely the target audience, the only condition would be that they use the digital station. In them can be inserted also hyperlinks to the web page of the organization where those interested can find out more information. It is indicated for the electronic newsletter to be sent weekly, to be concise and easy to be found information in it, in order for this to be read in the shortest time possible;
- Web site –in which besides the information that address to all the stakeholders can exist also private areas where only the employees of the organization can have access. This must be frequently updated because otherwise it denotes indifference upon the visitors and the users of the site. Also, the site must be accessible and easy to surf in, not to use jargon and abbreviations that only few of the users know;
- Other printed materials such as brochures, internal notes, announcements posted on the bulletin board etc., having the role of announcing the employees of the organization about the actual and future events. The messages on this path must include also contacts of the person or persons that, on demand, can offer more information about the event.

– The social media – permits the use of forums, chats that realize the interaction in real time, the posting of an announcement or a discussion subject, to be debated by the ones interested. Can be used both networks of social sites and blogs.

The organizations that communicate with their own employees can recourse to a wide range of events through which they can send a diversity of messages for attaining the marketing objectives. (Cetină, 2009). As in the case of the of the strategies of external communication through event can be taken into consideration the same set of criteria (table nr. 2) the type of event, the mean in which it is realized, the location, the period and the payment form (if the employee can participate for payment or free of charge at the relative event). (Masterman & Wood, 2006) Some events for employees are free of charge such as teambuilding or trainings, sometimes these must sign additional fidelity contracts for the organization that had discharged the participation to such events, for a determined period and in the case in which they want to collaborate with another company being forced to pay the consideration of the training programs because the organization will not recover the performed investment. And in this situation, the strategy of the communication chosen is constituted by a combination of strategic alternatives that have as a basis each of the criteria listed above. An example of strategy can look like: the type of event- training 1.A, form of organization- externalized (2.a), location – the headquarter of the organization (3.a), the period of development – weekend (4.b), payment method – for payment (5.a).

Table 2 Internal communication through event strategies

Criteria 1. The type of event	2. The form of organization can be realized in: direct labour/ externalized/ joint	3. Location: at the headquarter of the organization or in another location unless the headquarter of the organization	4. The period: weekend / during the week	5. Payment form ( contribution from the employee): paid / free of charge
A. Training	a. externalized b. joint	a. regularly at the headquarter of the organization if it disposes of the necessary space b. another location	a. during the week b. sometimes in the week-end	a. paid b. free of charge but with a fidelity contract
B. Teambuilding	a. externalized b. joint	a. usually in another location b. at the headquarter of the organization if it disposes of such a space	a. weekend b. during the week	a. free of charge b. free of charge but with a fidelity contract
C. Seminars / Webinars	a. direct labour b. joint	a. at the headquarter of the organization b. in another location	a. during the week b. weekend	a. free of charge b. free of charge but with a fidelity contract
E. Happy Hour	a. direct labour	a. in another location such as, for example: pubs, terraces , clubs	a. during the week	a. paid b. free of charge
F. Religious Holidays	a. direct labour b. joint	a. at the headquarter of the organization if it disposes of the necessary space b. another location	a. during the week	a. usually paid b. free of charge
G. Special occasions	a. direct labour b. joint	a. especially at the headquarter of the organization b. at the retail outlet of the products/ services	a. during the week	a. free of charge

#### 4. Conclusions

These strategies modulate and apply according to the human, material and financial resources of each and every organization, not being able to be considered generally valid, insensitive to the type of the organization, taking into account also the particularities of its internal and external environment and stakeholders.

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